

It's been a busy week out here in Heartland America! Our Medicare Drug Card Fairs are going splendidly. So far, the forums we have hosted to discuss the new prescription drug benefits in Medicare have gone very well, drawing no less than 100 seniors to each of the first three events.

Most folks show up pretty frustrated but leave feeling pretty good about their options with the new discount card. I think the big problem for folks is just getting started with the new card. With more than 70 discount cards out there, and an 800 number at Medicare that they can't get through on, they just don't know how to get the information to make the right choice.

Once we put other Internet options (like my website!) and phone numbers for individual companies in their hands, they seem genuinely relieved. I have had a few people express concerns about the impact that the full drug entitlement will have on their retirement drug coverage in 2006 but most of our discussions have focused on the timely help that is available for seniors, especially low-income seniors, right now.

When people ask me how I can be out stumping for a program I voted against, I'm always quick to say that while I did oppose the one-size-fits-all entitlement that takes effect in 2006, I always supported helping low-income seniors and using the private sector to get folks savings....which is exactly what this first phase is all about. mrp